

Yes Virginia, Dora and Elmo Will Stay with You for Life

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INTRO

- 66% of children exposed to TV content by age 2 (Common Sense Media, 2011)
- TV has been used as an educational tool since the 60s (e.g., *Sesame Street*, *Mister Rogers*) (Cooney, 1967)
- Has been shown to effectively teach important cognitive, social, and emotional skills from an early age
 - Literacy (e.g., Linebarger, 2015)
 - Prosocial skills (e.g., Cingel & Krcmar, 2019)
 - Emotional skills (e.g., Rasmussen et al., 2016)
- Less work has been done on long-term effects

METHODS

1. Participants were 194 undergraduate students taking introductory Psychology courses at a university in the Mid-South.
2. Participants were given a Qualtrics survey in which they were asked about the educational program they watched most in childhood.
3. They were asked to:
 1. Indicate the program they watched most often in childhood
 2. Indicate the extent to which they believed their most-watched program positively impacted their cognitive, social, and emotional skills
 3. Indicate any other ways their most-watched program was beneficial or meaningful to them (open-response)

RESULTS

Perceived impact on skills.

Dimension	Mean (1-5, 5 = strongly agree)	Standard Deviation
Cognitive	3.69	0.63
Social	4.06	0.65
Emotional	3.35	0.85

Participants believe they learned more than just basic cognitive, social, and emotional skills from their most-watched program!

Participants mentioned some common themes when asked to indicate additional ways their most-watched program impacted them, and these themes included learning about cultures, bonding with family, developing problem solving skills, and fun and happiness.

Additionally, a common theme among responses was that the programs were perceived as being interactive, and that interactivity aided in participants' learning from the program.

A particularly interesting theme, though mentioned less often, was a deeper level of long-term impact focused around adulthood. A few participants talked about how their most-watched program might have an effect on their decisions related to college or their career.

Learning About Cultures

"I feel like Sesame Street really taught me about a lot of different cultures."

"Dora exposed me to the [H]ispanic culture...This allowed me to experience cultures other than my own as a young child."

Bonding with Family

"It was a way that my siblings and I bonded."

"...shared a lot of memories...with my siblings."

Developing Problem Solving Skills

"...watching Dora...I learned problem solving skills and how to work as a team..."

"I'm sure that the puzzles built into the show played a role in my problem solving skills."

Fun/Happiness

"It still to this day is a show that I watch when I'm upset or need to calm down."

"It just made my childhood more fun."

Interactivity of Program

"...I felt like I personally knew Dora and she was talking directly to me."

"I felt as if I engaged more with Blue's Clues...because it seemed as if it was having a discussion with the audience."

Deep Long-Term Impact

"It didn't teach me much Spanish, but...I now have Spanish as my minor."

"...how to know that there are many careers in the world...to help find what you want to do in life and how it is being an adult."

DISCUSSION

- Responses indicate that these programs are sticking with people in the long-term
- Not only are they being remembered, they are...
 - Remembered as a positive aspect of one's childhood
 - Contributing to decisions one makes later in life
- Educational TV goes further than anticipated and may have the capacity to teach more complex skills/content than math, sharing, etc.
- Insight has been gained on how programs maintain attention of child viewers and teach effectively
- Interactivity of program appears to be important – this information can aid developers, producers, etc. in creating more effective content for children

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